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2 September 1966

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT : Fidel Castro's 29 August Speech

1. The complete text of Castro's five-hour speech at the conclusion of the 12th congress of the Cuban Workers Confederation (CTC) has finally been made available by FBIS. The speech contained few new themes. Notable by its absence, however, was Castro's usual ebullient confidence. The Cuban leader took this occasion to speak bluntly about some of the shortcomings of the people as well as of his revolution. In so doing, he revealed a good deal about his own thinking and about the current state of the Cuban revolution. It should be noted that the regime has announced that all party members should study Castro's speech in great detail and follow its directives.

2. As expected, Castro dwelt at some length on the problem of low labor productivity in Cuba and the need for the Cuban workers to end their "accommodating attitude toward work." In no uncertain terms, Castro made it clear that just because the workers' "chains were struck off" with the coming of the revolution and the ending of capitalism, they had no license for the resultant "loss of discipline, reduction in work intensity, and diminution in productivity."

3. Castro also admitted that the lack of good administrators had contributed to low worker output and poor quality goods. Many of the newly-appointed administrators lacked "experience, knowledge, or knowhow," according to Castro, who then digressed to philosophize on the general problem of making a bona fide revolution work. He recognized that "there is something very strange in revolutionary processes," and that revolutions have two facets: "One is the theoretical facet and the other is the practical facet. When one agitates from a barricade, when one issues a revolutionary proclamation, it all looks easy from afar...yet the most difficult task is to convert ideas into realities."

4. Castro made it clear that from now on, the party cadres must be the "main driving force" behind the Cuban "production processes" and the development of the economy. The cadres, Castro continued, must become economic technicians as well as

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party leaders in order to be effective in their work. In other words, Castro is saying that the party will direct as well as be responsible for the economic life of the country and those involved had better measure up to the job.

5. Castro revealed that now more than ever he is counting on technology to solve Cuba's many problems. He admitted that Cuba today has a serious "labor deficit," but he believes that machines will eventually make up the difference. Castro is betting that a viable economy can be based on intensive agriculture and that the key to the latter is mechanization. He admitted that "voluntary" student and female labor will be needed in the interim, but chided those officials who have come to accept these volunteers as the norm. In essence, Castro told the Cuban people that the only solution to the country's problems is hard work. He emphasized that "the revolution is the abolition of the exploitation of human labor but not the abolition of human work."

6. Castro then discussed some of the specific problems he has been groping with recently, and at the same time bared the nature of his own frustrations in trying to deal with these problems. He spoke at length about being badgered by people wanting improved housing. He calls this "thirst for housing" the regime's "most pressing problem." He criticized the tendency of people to approach him on his many forays around the island to say: "I was waiting to talk to you so that you could get me a house." Castro wailed, "the house, the house, the house. They are asking for something which could only be solved by producing the formula of Mandrake the Magician--that is, pulling a house out of a hat." Castro admitted that there is a shortage of one million houses in Cuba at the present time. He said he wants very much to solve this problem but "the resources are limited."

7. Castro instructed the party and labor cadres to "ponder the difficulties" of the revolution and to keep the people informed. "Each citizen must become aware that the weight of big responsibility rests upon his shoulders." Castro also acknowledged that differences of opinion exist within the regime on how best to proceed in "building socialism" on the island. He said that the first party congress will be held "next year," and that it will be an event of "utmost importance in the ideological field." Castro admitted that "on these matters no little confusion exists."

8. Castro apparently felt compelled to counter a certain amount of open disgruntlement with his regime's policies. For

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example, "so that the intriguers and the conspirators will not spread their gossip," he went to great lengths to justify the need for exporting rationed goods such as beef to foreign markets for scarce foreign exchange.

9. At the conclusion of the portion of his speech dealing with the Cuban domestic situation, Castro summed up in a single sentence what the future for the Cuban people held by saying: "The task before us is so overwhelming, so enormous, that what we have done is nothing, nothing in comparison with the tasks ahead."

10. Castro's foreign policy remarks were not especially noteworthy. He reiterated old claims that Cuba is following an "independent" course in the world revolutionary movement, and took a few implicit swipes at Peking. Castro said he is happy to be called a "revolutionary heretic" by others and reaffirmed his militant 26 July statements about the lack of revolutionary spirit of the Latin American Communist parties. He again criticized Chilean President Frei for being a "false revolutionary," and fulminated against "Yankee imperialist policies."



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